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Carol X Weakley 08/11/2006 04:46:44 PM From DB/Inbox: Carol X Weakley

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 003144

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/10/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [LE](#) [GM](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: LEBANON: GOI EXPLAINS CABINET DECISION TO GERMAN
FM; LITTLE DISCUSSION OF POSSIBLE BUNDESWEHR PARTICIPATION
IN INTERNATIONAL FORCE

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Gene A. Cretz; Reasons 1.4 (B and D).

¶1. (C) Summary: In meetings with German FM Frank-Walter Steinmeier on August 9, PM Ehud Olmert, FM Tzipi Livni, and DefMin Amir Peretz explained a security cabinet decision that reportedly authorizes a possible expansion of the scope of Israeli military operations in Lebanon. According to the MFA and the German Embassy, the Israelis informed Steinmeier that such steps could be postponed for "a couple of days," while negotiations on a UNSCR continue in New York. Both sides told post that there was no detailed discussion of draft UNSCR texts or of a possible German troop contribution to an international force in Lebanon, although Livni told the press that the GOI has no objection to the Bundeswehr's participation. Steinmeier repeatedly urged his hosts to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the Lebanese cabinet's announcement that the LAF would deploy 15,000 troops into southern Lebanon at the time of a ceasefire. EU HighRep Javier Solana is scheduled to visit Israel on August 13. End summary.

Visit Overshadowed by Security Cabinet Decision

¶2. (C) Steinmeier's visit was overshadowed by an August 9 decision by the Israeli security cabinet that reportedly authorized Olmert to expand the scope of military operations in Lebanon. According to the Germans, Olmert's explanation of the decision to Steinmeier ended with a warning that "I can hold back the generals for a short time -- a couple of days at most -- and then I have to unleash them." In this context, Olmert encouraged Steinmeier to help the UN "get the job done." In a separate meeting, Livni reiterated that the

GOI prefers a diplomatic solution. She portrayed the security cabinet's decision as a means of providing the Prime Minister with an option for further military operations if negotiations in New York reach an impasse or "take too long."

13. (C) In a discussion prior to the security cabinet session, Peretz reportedly complained that negotiations on a UNSCR are headed in the wrong direction. Peretz, who -- according to the German Embassy -- appeared emotional and exhausted, reportedly said that if the UN cannot act to remove the Hizballah threat "then the IDF will do it." When Steinmeier asked if this meant that the efforts in New York are in vain, Peretz quickly reassured him that Israel "will be the first one to accept a resolution."

Little Discussion of Possible German Troop Contribution

14. (C) According to the Germans, Steinmeier did not go into any detail discussing UNSCR drafts or the possibility of Bundeswehr troops participating in an international force in Lebanon. When asked about German troops in her press conference with Steinmeier, Livni replied "this is a decision that will be made separately and independently by the German government. From the Israeli Government's point of view, of course we have no objection." Note: The Israeli press has reported some opposition to the idea of German troops patrolling Israel's borders. High-ranking Israeli officials have told post that Olmert and Chancellor Merkel have discussed the possibility of a German troop presence along the Syrian-Lebanese border (and at ports and airports in Lebanon) to help enforce an international arms embargo on weapons not destined for the LAF or international troops. End note.

15. (C) Arriving from Beirut, Steinmeier described the Lebanese government's decision to deploy up to 15,000 troops into the south at the time of a ceasefire a "break through." he urged the GOI not to miss this "window of opportunity" for successful passage of a UNSCR.

16. (C) Despite media reports to the contrary, Steinmeier did not raise any Palestinian issues. The German Embassy said that Steinmeier is planning another Middle East trip in the near future. Any new visit is likely to follow a stop in Israel by EU HighRep Solana, which EU representatives say is scheduled for August 13.

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JONES